PART ONE "There is a place waiting for you."

Chapter 1

Karin was sitting on the garden bench, gazing at the flying butterfly jumping from one flower to another, trying to concentrate on the sunniest day that entered her heart by bringing joy and the soft melodies of the forest.

Nearby, a cat was staring at her from time to time, waving its fluffy tail. Its emerald pupils shone brilliantly, as if trying to absorb Karin's gaze.

The nearby cherry tree was swaying to the rhythm of the wind. Everything seemed gorgeous and fabulous, as if trying to attract everyone who entered this garden full of sweet fragrances and birds' songs. Meanwhile, the cat approached the bench where Karin was sitting and jumped up to her, rubbing against her...

"Oh my, little one!" Karin stroked her gently, amazed by her fluffy coat.

"You like being here, aren't you?" The cat bent over and reached out her paws to Karin's jacket, as if she was trying to count all the buttons on it.

"Oh You definitely like my jacket, don’t you?" Karin watched the cat mesmerized, looking up at her despite herself...

There was something magnificent and unexplainable in each of that cat's moves. Something that made Karin stare into her eyes longer and longer until those two emerald pupils emerged in a single flashing ball spinning around like a magic portal, calling to a new dimension—everyone who looked at it once. Meanwhile, the cat began to break into Karin's mind like a gentle wind blowing into it. The little girl felt dizzy and then sleepy, noticing how this green wave was taking over her body and transporting her into the magic green portal.

The entire garden had remained beyond the world Karin used to know, a world she considered ordinary since her childhood—full of simple miracles she had become accustomed to seeing every day and had grown numb to. At first, all her previous life, passing by in a small wooden house after her grandma's death, seemed as if it had never existed at all. She couldn't find a response within herself or explain the changes taking place in her own soul, mesmerized by this green portal. Moving forward or staying here, haunted by unbearable memories of her loneliness and her grandma's loss, all felt like torment—something too difficult to cope with.

She felt eager to leap into this new universe, its charm captivating her and taking her breath away. The distant sounds of the sea called her to take that one decisive step and begin her new life, and at last, she stepped forward... The green whirl embraced her gently, its soft hands carrying her through hundreds of similar green portals, each one shimmering softly. Her ears grew numb, as did the rest of her body, making her feel as light as the wind.

She opened her eyes and took a deep, trembling breath... Was it all a dream? But the surroundings spoke contradictorily. The first thing she saw was the blue, transparent water of the sea beneath her, gently touching her feet. Seagull voices echoed in the fresh air, filled with sunlight and a strange melody. Indeed... it was the song her grandma used to sing to her as a lullaby. But now, it sounded unfamiliar, as if she was hearing it for the first time in her life.

"Where am I? What’s happened to me?" she wondered.

By chance, she noticed a little girl her age standing nearby, tossing pebbles into the clear water, making them jump like frogs. Karin immediately stood up and approached the girl.

"Hi! I’m Karin. I’m new here. I don’t know how I got here," she blurted out.

The girl turned her face toward Karin, her eyes shining like two brilliant emeralds. "No one knows. But they always come here," she answered softly.

Chapter 2

"People call me Forget-Me-Not. I’ve lived here my whole life, surrounded by flowers, coming here every evening to watch the sunset. Like now," the girl said, her gaze fixed on Karin as if she weren’t surprised to see her at that moment.

"But it seems to be morning, doesn’t it?" Karin asked, feeling slightly confused by her explanation.

"Since the very beginning of my life, we’ve called this 'evening'," replied Forget-Me-Not. "When the sun sets, taking the neighborhood with its fire. Even the ocean cannot extinguish it; it only mirrors it."

Karin sat down on the sand, overwhelmed and overwhelmed by this new, strange feeling.

"But what about my grandma? Why am I still hearing her favorite melody?" she wondered, unable to find an answer.

"You hear voices from another coast, which is a thousand years away from here," responded Forget-Me-Not softly. "Unfortunately, they will never reach us anymore, but we preserve their history and traditions carefully for many years."

She sat next to Karin and threw another pebble into the quiet, clear sea. Karin breathed nervously, trying to make sense of what had just happened.

"I can't remember where I was just five minutes ago. But I still remember this melody clearly. Was it essential to recognize the melody afterward? It still doesn't make any sense to me..."

Feeling exhausted, she bent her knees and grabbed hot sand, filling her fingers with it. She felt that everything that had happened was a dream—a mild, smooth dream that made her feel nervous and insecure. But why?

"Are you afraid of that melody touching your ears, or of this clear, bright night?" Forget me not reached out to her and drew her closer to the waves splashing against the rocks nearby.

"Come with me, I have something to show you. This night promises to be fabulous!" The girl smiled, her eyes shining with that vibrant green color.

"But why are you persistently insisting that it's night, when I see the morning?" protested Karin.

Forget-Me-Not exploded with a hearty laugh.

"I guess they lied to you. Your soul has gotten used to this light, which has eventually made you confused about the true meaning of the word. There is no place to hide. Only this great yellow moon is illuminating your lonely past. Did your grandma used to sing you a lullaby?" The girl turned her tanned, fresh face toward Karin.

"How did you know she did? And why do you call the sun a star? I know I grew up somewhere else, but I've never called the sun a moon," Karin said, feeling completely broken and unsure of how to calm her pounding heart.

"I can figure it out, my dear. You've been lied to for years, but now it's time to forgive yourself and drop these chains that tie you to your past." The girl led her to the sea...

"Watch it... Watch it carefully!"

Karin started gazing at the sea, and little by little, it became clearer and clearer until she saw her own reflection.

She saw herself sitting in a garden next to her grandma, singing a lullaby while patiently making yarn.

Then, suddenly, the scene changed. In the next moment, she noticed her grandma leaving her alone and walking back home. The song was abruptly interrupted, and the girl—whom she recognized as herself—began to cry, mourning her grandma's absence.

Then she saw fighting crowds gathering in the area, filling it with violence. At the same moment, the sun in the sky was replaced by darkness, and the moon appeared in its throne.

"Because of the fury of your people, the sun hid itself, and the moon took its place," the girl said to Karin, who at that moment felt completely disoriented and broken.

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The grandma sat in her chair, swaying gently back and forth, whistling her favorite lullaby. The neighborhood was quiet, and only distant sounds reached her ears. The sea called for the sun to mirror itself in its waves, but still, it remained unanswered. Since the war had begun and more people had fallen into its infernal flames, grandma had made up her mind to sing her lullaby daily, to maintain a strong connection with her granddaughter, whom she had lost many centuries ago due to the unexpected events that swept through her village. It was when the giants—ten meters tall—called Atlantes,

brought violence and chaos. She also remembered the day the moon replaced the sun, a moment that changed her life once and for all.

Then she believed in that bright green eye called the Moon, which controlled everything beneath the sky and hypnotized everyone with its coldness.

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Forget-Me-Not gazed at Karin intently, then entered the water and immediately swam away.

"Hold on... I can't swim," cried the already shocked Karin.

But the wind muffled her hopeless efforts to reach out to her new friend. Forget-Me-Not easily disappeared into the sudden fog that was rolling in along the coast. Grandma's insistent melody still echoed in her ears. She rushed forward into the water, but the first thing she encountered was an unexplainable fear—that the water could suddenly turn into flames, which terrified her.

Only the abandoned, leaky boat was approaching the coast, as if it were calling her to revisit her past. Karin looked around hopelessly—there was no chance to stay here after losing her only guide on this island, now fallen into oblivion. She was still confused, unsure whether it was a dream or reality, but she stepped forward toward

the leaky boat, eager to get out of there as quickly as possible.

When she sat down, the boat sailed away as if some invisible spirit were guiding it out into the open sea.

Chapter 3

"Your Majesty! The girl is on her way to Cat’s Island...

She’ll be here in three thousand light-years," reported Forget-Me-Not, bowing before the fire-shaped giant seated on his throne, listening carefully to his servant.

The twenty-meter candles immediately lit up, illuminating the ruined interior of this ancient castle. Several cat-shaped shadows mirrored on the red-brick wall and dashed into the darkness.

"Did you make her believe that the sun is always replaced with a moon?" questioned the giant, red flames flickering out of his mouth as he spoke.

"Your Majesty! I suppose she is meant to follow her Grandma’s lullaby..." replied Forget-Me-Not, rising from her knees and preparing for his next question.

"I know she’s still strongly attached to it, even after we ruined her village and shattered her hopes. But her soul is eager to face the truth—she will climb any highest rock to see her sun once more," murmured the giant, closing

his eyes. Bright green light illuminated his face as he spoke.

Forget-Me-Not left the castle and decided to visit the abandoned garden where she first met the strange Karin.

She sat down on the bench, closed her eyes, and began listening to the distant sound of the sea. Something had changed since this garden had lost its inhabitants, transforming into a strange, eerie place to sit. The path leading downward seemed to call her to follow it. Forget-Me-Not stood up and quickly ran down the slope, pushing through thorny bushes that caused her to stumble all the way down. At last, she reached the coast, where the cool, fresh sea waves touched her feet.

The footprints she had left behind were still visible in the sand.

"She just left... I wish you good luck, my dear Karin."

The girl whispered, and the wind carried her words into the air. Seagulls screeched overhead, circling the abandoned coast under the endless blue sky.

"Maybe you'll discover why these replacements were made and why the sun turned into the moon. I’m sure you'll understand it quite soon."

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Meanwhile, Karin’s leaky boat sailed farther and farther from her memories, drifting into the fog as it moved into the unknown.

Chapter 4

The wind was blowing into Karin's face, making her feel cold. She shivered and looked around. The surroundings, covered by the fog, made these southern landscapes look anxious, as if the Green Eye was watching this little traveler from its high perch very intensely. The clouds hid and revealed themselves on the horizon, playing a game of hide and seek.

From time to time, the boat swayed heavily, following the stream, as if trying to knock her passenger over—sternly reminding Karin of danger—but the girl felt confident enough to make her way to this sound in her ears, which was like a lullaby.

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Forget-Me-Not was gazing into the distance, trying to recognize a faint, small bright star there. She closed her

eyes and began singing her favorite lullaby, calling Karin’s name within the melody.

O my princess, o my love!

Please keep going until sunrise.

The Seniour will not laugh

If you find this island twice...

The Green Eye went down dispersing in the fog.

"It’s going to sleep, but still it’s watching me... There is no place to hide..." she shivered and looked around. No one was there to see her loneliness in this abandoned place. She kept singing her lullaby.

If you find this island twice...

The Green Eye sank below, dispersing into the fog.

Please keep going until sunrise.

The Seniour will not laugh.

"Karin, my dear! Where are you now?" The coast remained silent—only the pebbles and sea waves nearby.

***

Grandma stood up and followed the path that led to the shore. The thorny bushes tried to tear her long dress, and the birds' songs, hidden here and there, accompanied her silent journey. Unable to bear her granddaughter's absence, she decided to reveal herself in front of the Forgiveness Atlantean, who dwelled in the sea.

She kept all her memories muddled and rushed forward, determined to carefully preserve each moment of her past until she reached the shore. There, she addressed the sea:

If I've lost my key to pass,

You are the one I can trust.

Let me ask you what I've done,

Until this storm has begun.

Immediately, the sea responded, tossing out objects that looked familiar to Grandma. Among them were two

shoes Karin used to wear and her favorite book—one that told stories of sea travelers, which Karin loved to read. Oh, she had always been such a dreamer, seeking her way to herself. Grandma closed her eyes.

Suddenly, the Great Giant appeared in her mind's eye, shaped of water, looking at her with a stern gaze.

"You think I stole Karin from you? How many times did you feel abandoned?" the giant asked angrily.

But you have never forgiven yourself for your past. So, how is she supposed to forgive herself then? As quickly as he had appeared, he vanished.

Grandma opened her eyes and reached the sea, which was calm and clear at that moment. She bent over, dipped her hands into the water, and washed her tear-streaked face. Then, deliberately, she looked up at the sky—toward the place where she believed the green eye, watching her, must be.

Meanwhile, in the middle of the sea where Karin sailed, a gentle, warm rain began to fall, making the girl feel a sense of release and happiness. A beautiful rainbow appeared in the blue, clear sky, adding to the moment's serenity.

Chapter 5

Immediately, a black cloud appeared on the horizon. Karin shivered, closed her eyes, and at the same moment, she saw a giant-shaped black smoke watching her intensely.

"Are you still blaming yourself for losing your grandma? I am the smoke caused by the fire that burns away all the bad moments of your life... Do you see the ash of your memories caught by the air and thrown into the sea?" The giant laughed and reached out to Karin.

Poor Karin felt herself start to become smaller and smaller until she turned into a tiny figure in the giant's palm.

"What's going on? Where am I?" Karin tried to observe her surroundings, but it seemed that the answers came sooner than her questions.

"Now you see that all your grief over losing your grandma is as huge as my palm, and you are only a tiny grain of sand on it." The giant burst out laughing even harder, and the wind turned into a whirl that collected the poor girl and dropped her into the open sea.

While she was falling, it seemed to her that many centuries had passed during the descent.

The forests, the places she loved to walk, her beautiful garden—all those things mixed up in her head, making her fear grow more and more. The giant’s voice echoed in Karin’s ears like the rumble of thunder.

"Make your choice immediately, or you'll be broken upon the rocks. If you don’t forgive yourself sincerely, you are finished." The giant’s voice grew louder and louder.

Karin realized that if she didn’t make up her mind now, everything could end instantly. She cried out,

"Yes. I’m forgiving myself. I’m forgiving myself. Help me. Don’t let me fall down."

At that moment, she truly felt all her griefs being released and turning into ash. The warm feeling of self-forgiveness embraced her as a colorful rainbow spread over her head.

She closed her eyes, gasping for air. She found herself on her leaky boat, sailing forward into the unknown. It feeling like waking up after a nightmare.

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Watching the horizon, Grandma saw black ash falling onto the sand, transforming into morning dew. She smiled.

Chapter 6

Forget-Me-Not was sitting on the floor, holding a little mirror in her hand. Little by little, her beautiful young face shaped different forms, gradually turning into that of an old lady. The old lady looked at her intensely in her reflection, not blinking her eyes either.

The girl got scared of what she saw there and threw the mirror away. 'No way. It must be a dream. Or this Green Eye is playing with me. What if Karin won't reach Cat Island? She is her only hope to know the future...

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Meanwhile, Karin's boat was reaching the island full of colorful flowers that appeared on the horizon. The fog had been retreating, revealing the full beauty of this unknown land that called to Karin, urging her to embark there as soon as possible. Finally, her leaky boat reached the shore, and she stepped onto the ground. With no idea what to expect from this new discovery, Karin

dashed forward, smelling the flowers, savoring their fragrances, and feeling utterly happy about what she had just seen.

"Oh, it's so amazing that I would love to stay here for the rest of my life," exclaimed Karin, jumping around and weaving a colorful wreath of flowers. Then she placed it on her head and looked around. There was a crystal-clear silence embracing her soul, giving her space to breathe and feel at peace. Suddenly, she heard a familiar melody coming from the nearby forest...

"O my princess, o my love!

Please keep going until sunrise.

The Seniour will not laugh

If you find this island twice..."

Karin shivered and listened carefully. The voice sounded again, soft and gentle.

"O my princess, o my love!

Please keep going until sunrise.

The Seniour will not laugh

If you find this island twice..."

"Grandma!" Karin cried out and rushed forward toward the forest from which she heard the melody. But as she approached, the forest began to transform into a reflection, like the images people used to see in the water.

Grandma was close, within reach. Karin reached out to touch her, but at the same moment, she was thrown back by an invisible force.

"Stand back, Karin!" cried Grandma. "They won't let you move forward until you reach the island of Cats, where all your questions will be answered."

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Meanwhile, on a different island, Grandma tried to signal Karin, pointing the way to the island of Cats. She saw her granddaughter in flesh and blood, reaching out desperately, but was unable to help her.

"Karin! I know you'll find me... and we will reunite very soon. Whatever happens, I'll never leave you alone. I'm on this Cats island. Find me there!" Grandma's voice trembled with hope and longing.

Tears of despair and a feeling of loss overwhelmed her, draining her of strength, and she collapsed onto the sand, unconscious.

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Karin kept watching as her Grandma reached out to her, still unable to grasp her hand. Despite the distance and the impossible separation, the girl knew her grandmother was still alive. She believed she would walk through countless centuries if needed, just to be with her again.

PART TWO "TO FACE SELF"

Chapter 1

The castle's brick walls were illuminated by innumerable torches set at various angles along the long and narrow hall through which Forget-Me-Not was making her way—back to her Master. Was that horrible, flaming giant her Master possessing all her being, or just her flesh? As she moved forward, her anxious thoughts transformed into an invisible fiery part of herself. How long would she be able to serve her memories, living in this soulless place called Cat's Island? For many centuries, she had been imprisoned on this island, absorbing all the chaos and

lifelessness around her. The vases with flowers only hinted at life; the flowers themselves were made of stone instead of being alive. What about the cats? Since she stepped into that green eye, which turned into a portal, she stopped remembering her past. There were only remnants of those shining, bright moments that had once filled her life with joy and happiness.

Is it not the time to escape from it? Her eyes lit up and immediately went dark again, giving way to her sorrow. She stopped walking, sat down on the cold floor, and cried. How could she explain this to Karin, whose soul was on her way to encounter the island that Forget-Me-Not was desperately trying to escape from? Poor Karin... She had no idea that there was no way to truly know the truth—only endless spinning around the past, like a crazy sun orbiting the globe again and again.

She tried to mentally connect with Karin, sending her a signal to be careful when sailing to this island, to avoid all possible temptations. But at the same time, she realized that her thoughts about Karin only reflected her own fears. It seemed she harbored a strange feeling about all the chaos she was living through. Why had she always seen Karin as part of her inner world—an almost magical influence on her storyline?

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The tailwind pushed the leaky boat forward, with confused Karin aboard. As it moved onward, new scenery began to take shape on the horizon. The water ahead looked suspiciously green, as if it were a reflection of that Green Moon, which never stopped watching her.

"Why is it watching me all the way?" Karin asked herself, trying to calm down. Meanwhile, her leaky boat was approaching the green water, which made Karin feel even more frightened.

She had expected to see her Grandma imprisoned in this magical space, but instead, she only heard faint sounds of that familiar lullaby, echoing in her mind like a crystal voice of her soul.

"O my princess, o my love!

Please keep going until sunrise.

The Seniour will not laugh

If you find this island twice..."

Karin listened to her voice carefully.

"Why are these sounds so inexplicable?" she wondered. She knew that her inner voice belonged to her Grandma, and that her past dwelled somewhere between this lullaby and the strange girl she had met on that island—the one called Forget-Me-Not flower.

"O my princess, o my love!

Please keep going until sunrise.

The Seniour will not laugh

If you find this island twice..."

By the time the water was illuminating, casting strange reflections, Karin couldn't believe what she saw. She closed her eyes briefly and opened them again. When she did, she saw the stranger—the Forget-Me-Not—embracing her Grandma amidst her favorite, flourishing garden, the one she used to walk in.

A small, fluffy cat sat nearby, carefully rubbing the girl's leg. A new insight suddenly dawned on Karin.

"Isn't this the cat I used to love to play with? Why is that cat here with that girl? I have to do something before it's too late."

Simultaneously, the waves around Karin's boat had been rising, ready to absorb her with their green light. One moment more, and she was soon completely shocked by what she saw. The enormous green giant, made of this shining green light, rose in front of her and began speaking to the frightened girl. The giant's words echoed in her ears, making her knees tremble.

"How long have you been sitting in your dreaming garden, hopelessly trying to get your Grandma back? Have you ever thought that as long as your memory is awakened, you are its prisoner?" The giant laughed and disappeared as soon as he showed himself.

Karin looked at the splashes made by the giant and suddenly saw herself—Forget-Me-Not—and her beloved Grandma reaching out to her. She cried out loud, trying to quiet her own voice of despair. Something inside had been telling her that it was all a miracle or a mirage, and that it would pass soon. But the more she stared at the crystal-clear water, trying to distinguish these familiar figures, the more she was absorbed by the all-consuming green light entering her soul and tearing it into tiny pieces.

In the next second, she was caught by the wind, and then... she opened her eyes and found herself sitting on a bench near a familiar cherry tree. A lovely, fluffy cat was murmuring nearby.

Nearby, a cat was staring at her from time to time, waving its fluffy tail. Its emerald pupils shone brilliantly, as if trying to absorb Karin's gaze.

The nearby cherry tree was swaying to the rhythm of the wind. Everything seemed gorgeous and fabulous, as if trying to attract everyone who entered this garden full of sweet fragrances and birds' songs. Meanwhile, the cat approached the bench where Karin was sitting and jumped up to her, rubbing against her...

"Oh my, little one!" Karin stroked her gently, amazed by her fluffy coat.

"You like being here, aren't you?" The cat bent over and reached out her paws to Karin's jacket, as if she was trying to count all the buttons on it.

"Oh You definitely like my jacket, don’t you?" Karin watched the cat mesmerized, looking up at her despite herself...

The cat's eyes were turning more and more green, forming a portal that seemed very familiar to Karin.

At the same time, she noticed the book lying nearby with a bright pink cover entitled "Forget-Me-Not's Adventures." She opened this mysterious book on its title page and read...

She felt eager to leap into this new universe, its charm captivating her and taking her breath away. The distant sounds of the sea called her to take that one decisive step and begin her new life, and at last, she stepped forward... The green whirl embraced her gently, its soft hands carrying her through hundreds of similar green portals, each one shimmering softly. Her ears grew numb, as did the rest of her body, making her feel as light as the wind.

She opened her eyes and took a deep, trembling breath... Was it all a dream? But the surroundings spoke contradictorily. The first thing she saw was the blue, transparent water of the sea beneath her, gently touching her feet. Seagull voices echoed in the fresh air, filled with sunlight and a strange melody. Indeed... it was the song her grandma used to sing to her as a lullaby. But now, it sounded unfamiliar, as if she was hearing it for the first time in her life.

"Where am I? What's happened to me?" Karin jumped up from what she had just read and looked around, trying to make sure that no one was seeing her.

"Was it just a dream, or was I really captivated by this strange universe... and even more so by that mysterious girl called Forget-Me-Not, who reminded me of myself, Karin?"

She carefully turned the page and resumed reading...

The entire garden had remained beyond the world Karin used to know, a world she considered ordinary since her childhood—full of simple miracles she had become accustomed to seeing every day and had grown numb to. At first, all her previous life, passing by in a small wooden house after her grandma's death, seemed as if it had never existed at all. She couldn't find a response within herself or explain the changes taking place in her own soul, mesmerized by this green portal. Moving forward or staying here, haunted by unbearable memories of her loneliness and her grandma's loss, all felt like torment—something too difficult to cope with.

She stopped reading and looked at the place where the fluffy cat had been sitting... It was gone... Karin immediately felt frightened by the sudden, unexpected changes occurring in that moment... But everything seemed to disillusion and break her, even the wind sounded menacing.

"What is going on here? I clearly remember that just five minutes ago I was on that magical island, and now I’m sitting here." She shivered from the cold and turned the next page...

Karin looked at the splashes made by the giant and suddenly saw herself—Forget-Me-Not—and her beloved Grandma reaching out to her. She cried out loud, trying to quiet her own voice of despair. Something inside had been telling her that it was all a miracle or a mirage, and that it would pass soon. But the more she stared at the crystal-clear water, trying to distinguish these familiar figures, the more she was absorbed by the all-consuming green light entering her soul and tearing it into tiny pieces.

In the next second, she was caught by the wind, and then... she opened her eyes and found herself sitting on a bench near a familiar cherry tree. A lovely, fluffy cat was murmuring nearby.

"It can’t be! How does this book know everything that happened to me in the past?" cried Karin.

She turned another page, but instead of words, she found a blank page. She kept turning more and more, but the result was the same. It seemed that the rest of this book was up to her to write herself.

Karin tried to pinch herself to make sure she wasn’t dreaming or hallucinating... She did it ten times, then refocused on the pressing issues that needed her attention. She stood up and rushed toward the nearby path that led to the sea, the sound of the waves echoing in her ears.

In one minute, she reached the lonely coast, where seagulls were screaming. But it wasn’t lonely anymore. The beach had turned into a lively place filled with many people relaxing under the sun, children building sandcastles, and parents lying nearby, soaking up the rays.

She dashed toward the crowd, desperate to ask if anyone knew what had been happening here, unable to endure the inner torment any longer. Her eyes landed on a girl sitting on the sand, gazing into the distance. She seemed like the right person to ask.

"Excuse me! Where am I?" Karin mumbled, struggling to find the right words to sound clear. "What year is it now?"

The girl turned to face her, and at that very moment, Karin was petrified. In that tanned, beautiful silhouette, she recognized the Forget-Me-Not.

Chapter 2

The tanned girl stepped aside from her.

"I'm not Forget-Me-Not! What kind of name is that, only given to cats?" she looked at Karin, completely surprised.

"What a name!" she repeated the phrase she had just pronounced. "I'm Karin."

Less than anything, Karin expected to hear her own name. She started feeling dizzy and faint, and in the next second, she found herself lying on the hot sand. Water droplets were slightly touching her face. It was this tanned girl trying to bring her back to life.

"Wake up! Wake up! What's happened to you?" the girl was calling someone to help her in her emergency. In a few seconds, Karin saw the face that seemed so familiar to her.

The feminine voice seemed to belong to an old lady and sounded soft and familiar too. She opened her eyes and could not believe what she saw. It was her grandma, trying to bring her to her senses.

"Are you okay, dear?" the old lady asked, lifting her up by her back and looking into her eyes with her sky-colored eyes.

"Grandma..." Karin managed to spell out, tears streaming down her face. "Thank God! I finally met you..." She reached out and embraced the old lady as tightly as she could. Her face was filled with tears.

"Grandma... I can't believe I've finally found you!"

The old lady, embarrassed by such a sudden gesture, felt completely confused and had no idea how to react. The tanned girl stood up and stepped back.

"What? Grandma? Do you have more grandchildren, Grandma?" she asked, looking at her grandmother with a hint of jealousy.

The old lady turned back to the girl, who looked like a Forget-Me-Not, and impressively pointed out, "Be quiet! This poor girl doesn't feel well, does she? Instead of showing off your caprices, you'd rather help me."

The girl calmed down and approached Karin, whose head was still dizzy and faint.

"What's going on? Where am I?" she couldn't believe what she had just seen.

"Are you okay, dear? Are you sure you don't need a doctor?" the old lady carefully asked Karin, trying to clarify the situation and understand what had happened to the strange girl fainting on the hot sand.

"Are you okay, girl?" repeated the old lady, staring at her intently.

"Yes. I feel better now. But why?" she said, pointing to the tanned girl called, coincidentally, Karin. "Why does she look like the girl I always knew?"

The old lady helped Karin to get up, brushing the sand out of her hair, and, holding Karin’s hand, asked her kindly, "What is your name, dear?"

"My name is Karin..." murmured Karin, still feeling faint.

"What?!" the tanned girl standing nearby, who reminded Karin of her old friend, suddenly blurted out.

"Such a coincidence, isn’t it, dear?" the old lady, who looked like Karin’s grandma, turned to the tanned girl.

"Grandma, it’s me..." murmured Karin, holding the old lady’s hand and trying to make her recognize her in this confused girl—her granddaughter whom she had lost many centuries ago. "Don’t you recognize me?"

She tried to clear up this misunderstanding as quickly as possible.

The old lady smiled, then looked at the tanned girl nearby, and stood up. At that very moment, the waves of the sea rose enormously, turning the sand into a

tumultuous mess. The old lady suddenly started laughing with a monstrous voice...

"Ja ja ja... Have you really believed that I'm your grandma?"

At the same moment, Karin faced a huge sand giant standing in front of her, laughing in her face. The crowded beach transformed into a complete desert simultaneously.

"You have passed the test. Not perfectly, but enough to move forward... Now you've learned how to embrace your worst fears and channel them in the right direction."

After saying these words, the giant disappeared, turning into a cloud of sand.

Karin lay down on the sand and cried out loud. The entire desert seemed unable to contain her grief, filled with tears. The girl was completely broken. She had no idea how to escape this abandoned place. She tried to breathe, but she couldn't. The sand island started spinning around in front of her eyes, pulling her vision deeper and deeper...

Karin tried to breathe again, but it was impossible. "Maybe this is the end of all my dreams," the thoughts

raced through her mind like wild horses. The sand whirl was already touching her eyes, engulfing her entire body in the sandy storm.

.....

She opened her eyes and looked around. She was sitting on a bench in her beloved garden, holding a book open to a specific page. She gazed at the open page and froze, petrified by what she read there.

Karin lay down on the sand and cried out loud. The entire desert seemed unable to contain her grief, filled with tears. The girl was completely broken. She had no idea how to escape this abandoned place. She tried to breathe, but she couldn't. The sand island started spinning around in front of her eyes, pulling her vision deeper and deeper...

Karin tried to breathe again, but it was impossible. "Maybe this is the end of all my dreams," the thoughts raced through her mind like wild horses. The sand whirl was already touching her eyes, engulfing her entire body in the sandy storm.

Now she realized that it was up to her to write the end of this story... There were some blank pages left to record the past.

Chapter 3

From the author

While the whole world has been staying curious about Karin's state of mind, there have been fewer characters introduced, and some were presented improperly.

My dear reader! You may not know who all those giants we met during the story were or how they connect to Karin's storyline. There is no clear answer, and there may not be any explanation for such a mysterious fairy tale. Have you ever tried to put yourself in the main character's place, endowing yourself with all these shapes and sensations? Sometimes, we all have to face our past, unzipping our memories from their wrapped covers. At times, this makes us feel annoyed; at other times, it makes us feel anxious. But whenever we think about it, we realize it’s up to us to decide the fate of our memories.

A grain of sand is equal to millions of grains driven by the wind, flying and falling down as if they were anxious relatives with no shelter to rest. Someone loses their past hopelessly, trying to recover any piece of it. Our imagination is full of nightmares created by our mind, which at times treats us cruelly, showing no mercy—as if

we were endless prisoners of our fantasies, seeing no way out.

After Karin lost her beloved grandma, she set herself on a path of being tested by her tormenting feelings. The garden where she used to read her books and play with her cat gradually became her most unbearable nightmare. She imprisoned herself in a tiny world filled with lullabies and great monsters, which embodied her most frightening fears—such as losing all responsibilities in an instant, facing reality. Her naive dreams of regaining those miraculous moments of the past by staying present now seem distant. And now, her tiny world is being completely shattered, turning into a swirling whirl of sand.

* * *

Karin put the book aside and looked around. The cat was sitting nearby, rubbing her head against Karin’s feet.

"Oh, my beloved cat! What was her name? I barely remember. What’s happened to me?" The girl stood up and decided to walk to freshen up. The anxiety didn’t leave her for a second. She tried to analyze what had just happened but couldn’t find any answer that more or less corresponded to her situation.

She remembered a dream she had as a child, in which huge men were lying in a hospital connected to life-support systems—kind of like medicinal respirators—and many small doctors were running around like tiny nervous ants building their houses. They served those giant people, whose breathing echoed in Karin's ears like a nightmare. What planet did they come from? She also remembered that the walls of that place were covered with a stinky, slimy liquid dripping from the ceiling, like in a Chinese torture chamber.

Slowly and patiently, she tried to keep her mortal fear awakened for as long as possible. There were no walls between the operational rooms; everyone could see each other naked or stressed out. The anxiety that grew as her memories resurfaced kept her on edge. At the end of the hallway, she recalled a bright blinking lamp that caught her attention. She followed it, and then...

Who were all these giant people? She remembered their names: Regret, Sorrow, Doubt—all of these names related to human feelings and experiences.

The further she moved forward in her dream, the older she became physically, and that blinking lamp seemed to be laughing in her face, as if it was a game with no real outcome for any of the characters involved.

Then she saw herself as if it was a mirror reflecting every single movement of her. She saw herself as a grandma. Why did she look as if she were her twin?

"Grandma!" she shouted loudly. "Are you here?" But no one responded in the overwhelming silence. She only saw people her age sitting with their cushions in various corners of the hallway. Two doors were slightly ajar: from one, a stuffy airless warmth; from the other, a chilling cold that made her feel frozen.

"Which way will you follow?" the voice spoke to her. She immediately rushed toward the airless, stuffy corner, where she was swept up by a whirling wind that carried all her memories in a bright, colorful stream. Toys, books, and cats floated around her, shouting loudly as if they were alive.

"Let us go! Let us go!" The lullaby Karin used to hear had transformed into nightmare voices, engulfing her entire being.

"We are no longer your prisoners! We are willing to live our own lives! Have mercy on us!" they cried out.

Suddenly, countless stars began to fall from the sky, bursting in spectacular explosions at the Earth's surface—one by one, second after second, century after century.

The civilization had begun to transform into a different form of its nature, where people were like tiny mechanisms maintained by their extraordinary ability to love. The stars kept falling, and Karin found herself feeling increasingly disconnected from this chaotic world, retreating more and more into a space of harmony where she could find all the answers to the questions that had tormented her for years.

Nevertheless, she felt herself aging mentally; her mindset was able to perceive things as if she were just six years old. The bright whirl carried her body through countless others, following her shallow breathing. She began to feel like Alice in a marvelous place, jumping from one flower to another and trying to look at things more thoroughly.

A soft, gentle voice echoed over her head: "Now you've reached your dreams, Karin. Your aspiration to be with those you love has helped you to attain it. Whenever you miss your beloved ones, just come here, and you will be reunited with them. You've earned it! All the Atlanteans you encountered on your journey were doubts, but you overcame them all in the name of love. Your heart deserves to love and to be loved."

In the next moment, she found herself back on the same beach where her story had begun, watching the distant horizon and trying to understand what changes had taken place. Standing right in front of her was an old lady waving warmly.

"Grandma!" cried Karin, rushing forward as if she had been waiting for this touching reunion for centuries.